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December 17, 2015

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry,

I write to express my grave concern with the arrest of human rights lawyer Nguyen Van Dai yesterday in Vietnam on charges of “propaganda against the state.” Dai’s arrest comes just over a week after he was beaten by a group of unknown attackers at a training forum he was conducting, according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

I urge the State Department to press the Vietnamese government to immediately release Dai and drop all charges against him. Moreover, the Vietnamese government must unequivocally put an end to attacks on human rights activists.

When I visited Vietnam earlier this year as part of a congressional delegation, I had the pleasure of meeting Dai in person. It saddens me to think that Dai and other activists must live in fear for their own safety simply for exercising their most basic human rights.

Earlier this year, I wrote to the Prime Minister and President of Vietnam about the brutal attack on Nguyen Chi Tuyen, a leading voice for environmental justice in Hanoi. These two attacks—startlingly in their similarity—highlight a pattern of human rights abuses by the Vietnamese government that cannot be tolerated.

While the Trans-Pacific Partnership now faces approval by the United States Congress, Vietnam continues to show no signs of improvement in respecting the fundamental rights of its own citizens. A strong relationship between the United States and Vietnam can only exist when human rights are fully respected and protected in Vietnam.

I respectfully ask for your prompt attention to this matter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

Cc: United States Ambassador Ted Osius